

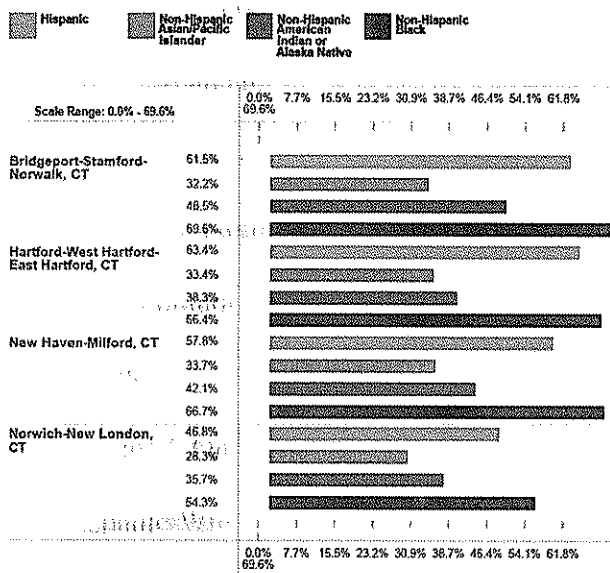
Connecticut Fair Housing Center

TESTIMONY OF ERIN BOGGS, ESQ.
OF THE CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER
IN OPPOSITION TO AMENDMENTS TO THE
AFFORDABLE HOUSING APPEALS ACT, C.G.S. §8-30g

My name is Erin Boggs and I am an attorney and the Deputy Director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. I am here today to testify generally in opposition to weakening the Affordable Housing Appeals Act because of its significance to furthering fair housing in Connecticut. Where you live can affect every aspect of your life, for example where you work, whether you have access to healthy food or are exposed to pollution, and whether your children can safely play outside and attend thriving schools. Where you live frequently dictates the scope and diversity of the social networks that lead to employment. The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that everyone in the state has access to housing of their choice free from discrimination. We carry out our work through civil rights litigation and advocacy on behalf of victims of housing discrimination and research and policy development in the areas of racial isolation and access to opportunity.

In Connecticut we face the twin problems of racial and economic isolation and a lack of affordable housing. The Affordable Housing Appeals Act, in its current form, plays a crucial role in helping the State address both of these problems. Others testifying today will address the dearth of affordable housing in Connecticut. I will focus my remarks on the issue of racial isolation.

According to the 2008 American Community Survey, residents identifying themselves as “White/Non-Hispanic” comprise 74.05% of Connecticut’s population.¹ People of color² constitute 25.95% of Connecticut residents.



Graph 1: Dissimilarity Index for Connecticut Metropolitan
Source: Diversity Data, see footnote 5.

Connecticut’s population of color resides overwhelmingly in its urban areas and is more likely to be low-income or live in low-income areas compared to the state’s White/Non-Hispanic population. Fifty percent of people of color in Connecticut live in just 8 cities.³ Only 13% of the state’s non-Hispanic White population lives in these cities.⁴ Across the state, Hispanics and non-Hispanic

Blacks/African-Americans are, at a minimum, 7 times more likely to live in a high poverty area than a White/Non-Hispanic person.⁵ In Connecticut, African-Americans and Latinos are approximately 4 times more likely to be poor than Caucasians.⁶

Connecticut’s population is also racially isolated. Two of Connecticut’s four major metropolitan areas rank in the top 10 in the nation for Hispanic/White segregation using the “dissimilarity”

¹ American Community Survey, 2008, Connecticut, available at http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000US09&-qr_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_DP3YR2&-ds_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_-lang=en&-redoLog=false&-sse=on.

² “People of color” as used here means residents identifying themselves as non-White or Hispanic.

³ American Community Survey, 2008, see footnote 1. Calculated based on information available from American Community Survey for Connecticut and the cities of Bridgeport, Stamford, New Haven, Waterbury, New Britain, Hartford, Norwalk and Norwich. These cities are also overwhelmingly “opportunity isolated” with little access to high performing schools, low-crime open space, or areas of low poverty concentration. See footnote 9 infra.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Source: Diversity Data, available at <http://diversitydata.sph.harvard.edu/>. In the Bridgeport/Stamford/Norwalk area, a Hispanic/Non-White person is 18 times more likely and a non-Hispanic Black/African-American person 17 time more likely to reside in a high poverty area than a White/Non-Hispanic individual. Id.

⁶ Source: Data Haven, <http://www.ctdatahaven.org/blog/>. The data from this source does not distinguish White/Hispanics or African-American Hispanics from non-White or non-African-American Hispanics, so there is some double counting.

racial segregation index – the Hartford area ranks 5th and Bridgeport area ranks 9th.⁷ See **Graph 1** for the dissimilarity rating by race for each of Connecticut’s major metropolitan areas.⁸

Connecticut’s stark racial and economic isolation is particularly troubling when one considers the effect it has on opportunities available to individuals and families protected by the Fair Housing Act. To better articulate this inequity, in 2009 the Connecticut Fair Housing Center commissioned a report from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, “*People, Place and Opportunity: Mapping Communities of Opportunity in Connecticut*,” (“Opportunity Mapping Study”), which uses a series of eleven data points, such as school performance, mean commute time, poverty, to assess the opportunity available in each census tract in Connecticut.⁹ Through use of this new method we determined that 81% of African-Americans and 79% of Latinos but only 25.8% of Non-Hispanic Whites in Connecticut live in lower opportunity areas (See Map 1).¹⁰ Our report concludes that we must do two things: bring targeted resources to lower opportunity areas and connect people of color to higher opportunity areas through means such as affordable housing.

It is critical to retain the Affordable Housing Appeals Act in its current form to counteract the deep lines of racial and economic isolation in this state. The future of this state and the country is an ethnically diverse, multicultural future. If we fail to open opportunities, particularly educational opportunities, to the full diversity of our population we will be committing a tremendous injustice and putting the breaks on a significant and growing portion of Connecticut’s economic engine. The Affordable Housing Appeals Act is balanced, effective and in the best interest of Connecticut.

⁷ Diversity Data. (Surveying 362 metropolitan areas).

⁸ Id.

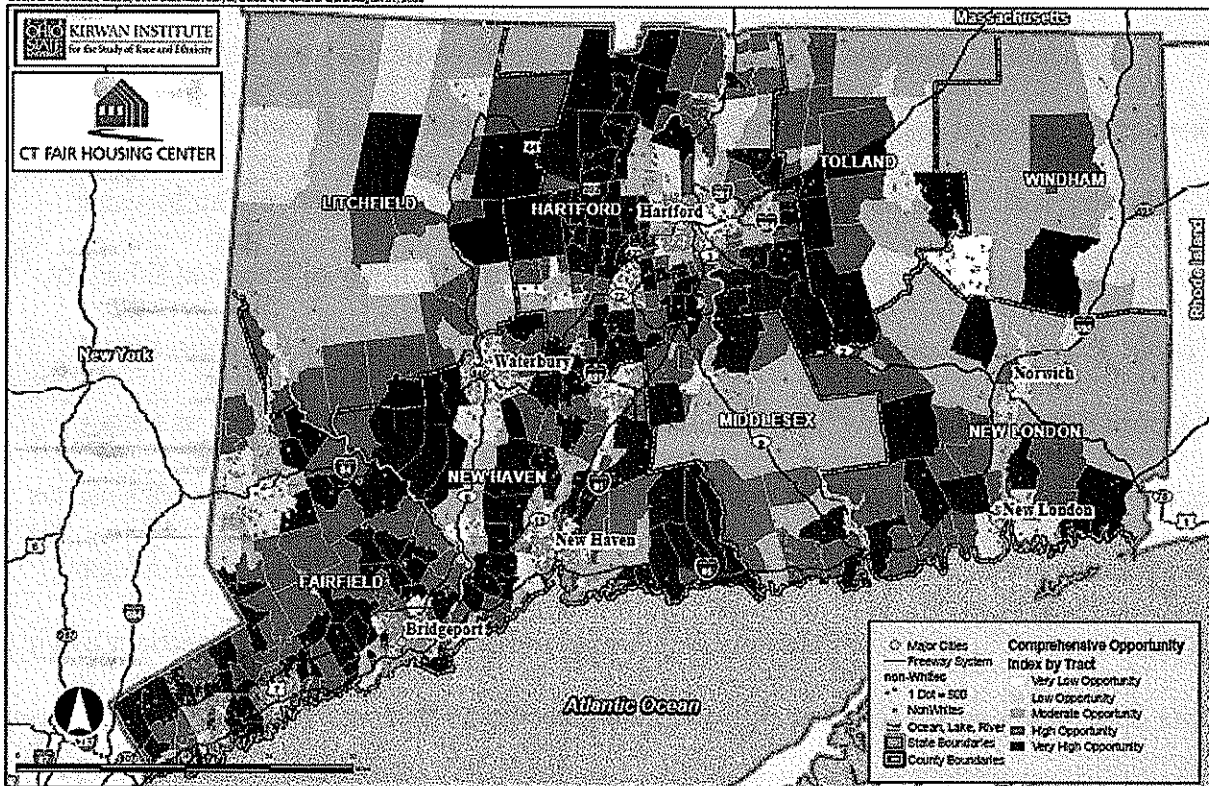
⁹ This report is available at: <http://kirwaninstitute.org/research/projects/ct-opp-mapping/index.php>. The data points are Education (math and reading test score and educational attainment), Economic Opportunity (unemployment, population on public assistance, job growth, and mean commute time) and Neighborhood/Housing Quality (vacancy rate, crime rate, poverty rate and home ownership rate), see pg. 7. This report articulates a view similar to the “zip code” discussions of HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims and concepts within the HUD Strategic Plan for 2010-2015.

¹⁰ See id. at pg. 12.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity by census tract based on Education, Economic & Mobility, and Housing & Neighborhood indicators, overlaid with non-White population.

Source: US Census, C2000, ESRI Business Analyst, DECD and MAGIC. Date: August 31, 2009



Map 1: Comprehensive Opportunity with Race Overlay